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Steeple damage prompts church closing

By John Chaffee
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DUXBURY — The Holy Family Church's 65-foot steeple swayed in the fierce winds during the storm Friday, necessitating closing the church and putting it under 24-hour police guard.

Parishioners who showed up for Mass yesterday learned that Mgr. William Glynn, the church's pastor, had granted them special dispensation from attending weekly services.

For a few hours Friday, it appeared that the white, four-sided steeple would crash down onto the roof of the cross-shaped church below, bringing a 4,000-pound bell down with it. Two of the four huge posts on which the steeple rests had been pulled loose by the wind.

Yellow and black tape was strung across the entrance to church drive-ways and parking lots and a police officer was posted to keep people away.

Duxbury

The Rev. Joseph Raeke, associate pastor, said a "large crane" would arrive today to take the steeple down for repairs, which could take most of the day.

After the steeple has been removed, the church will reopen and a redesigned steeple will be installed at a later date, the Rev. Raeke said.

Holy Family is the only Roman Catholic church in Duxbury and, with a membership of 2,000 families, is the town's largest church.

Parishioners learned of the dispensation when they called the church office and heard a recorded message or showed up at the church and saw a written message.

A schedule of Masses at neighboring parishes was posted and Holy Family parishioners were encouraged

to attend one of them.

One parishioner, John Tuffy, who estimated that he attends Mass at least 45 weeks every year, said he and his son planned to attend a CCD Mass at St. Ann's Church in Marshfield last night.

Vincent Walsh, on the other hand, said he and his wife, Lynne, "decided it was a true act-of-God vacation" and stayed home. Walsh said his family usually attends Mass at Holy Family, where his daughter sings in the choir, his son is an altar boy and his wife teaches in the CCD program.

"It's turned into a very lazy Sunday," Walsh said.

The \$3 million church was built in 1987 and 1988 on a 12.7-acre site at the corner of Tremont Street (Route 3A) and Chestnut Street. It was dedicated by Cardinal Bernard Law in May of 1988.

Two months ago, Cardinal Law returned to Holy Family to mark the parish's 50th anniversary.